SUNDAY CIRCLE

AI, the Church, and the Community

Artificial intelligence profoundly reshapes the modern world, and our church family is no exception. It raises crucial ethical questions about human dignity, creativity, and preserving authentic spiritual community in a digital age. As congregations explore these technologies, discussions must address how automated tools can enhance lives while risking diluted personal pastoral connection. We will discuss how AI has impacted our lives, share concerns and hopes, and learn how we can move forward comfortably and safely.

For FYI -

Sept 2nd – All Saints in Frederick gave a talk on AI in the Church. It was presented by…

- Rev. Dr. Michael Delashmutt, Senior Vice President of General Theological Seminary in New York City
- Rev. Dr. Pan Conrad - Episcopal priest and a scientist - interim rector of Memorial Episcopal Church in Baltimore, MD, as the Warden of the North American Province of The Society of Ordained Scientists, and as research associate at the Earth and Planets Laboratory of The Carnegie Institution of Science. She is a twenty-five year veteran of NASA.
- Dr. George Dimitoglou - A professor of computer science at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County
- Dr. Mark A. Thompson, Sr - Endowed Professor of Computer Science and Technology at McDaniel College.

We are going to try and show the recording at a future date for folks to hear the lecture/discussion. More to come on the presentation.

https://allsaintsmd.org/keynote-speaker-the-rev-dr-michael-w-delashmutt/

Pope Leo's Magnifica Humanitas – on AI – Also brought up during the discussion -

https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html

A quick background -

What Is Artificial Intelligence?

Artificial intelligence, or AI, is technology that allows computers to do things that normally require some form of human intelligence—such as recognizing patterns, understanding language, solving problems, making predictions, or creating content.

A simple way to think about AI is this: AI learns patterns from large amounts of information and uses those patterns to produce an answer, prediction, recommendation, or action.

For example, imagine you read thousands of mystery novels. Eventually, you would begin recognizing patterns: how mysteries are structured, what kinds of clues authors leave, and even what words are commonly used. If someone gave you the beginning of a new mystery, you might be able to predict what could happen next.

AI works somewhat like that—but it can analyze enormous amounts of information much faster than a person can.

Where are we already using AI?

Many of us use AI every day without realizing it.

When Netflix recommends a movie you might enjoy, AI is involved. When your phone recognizes your face, your email filters spam, Google Maps predicts traffic, or Amazon recommends a product, AI may be working behind the scenes.

AI is also being used in healthcare to help analyze medical images, in banking to detect possible fraud, in businesses to analyze information, and in cars to provide safety features.

Newer generative AI tools, such as ChatGPT, can create something new in response to our instructions. They can help write an email, summarize a document, brainstorm ideas, translate languages, create images, explain complicated subjects, or help someone learn.

But there is an important distinction:

AI does not think, believe, love, hope, pray, or understand the world in the same way a human being does.

It can produce language that *sounds* thoughtful because it has learned patterns in human language. It can also make mistakes, reflect biases in its information, or confidently provide incorrect answers.

That is why the important question isn't simply, "Should we use AI?"

AI is already part of our lives.

Questions for Discussion –

- **What is everyone's feelings about technology and/or AI?**
- **What do you think are advantages of AI or disadvantages?**
- ***Where have you encountered artificial intelligence in the last 24 hours—even if you didn't intentionally use AI?***
- ***What is AI revealing about the Church and the world we have become… and what might that be unveiling invite us to become?**
- ***How should we receive and use technology? How is technology already shaping what we see?**